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The Many Genders Of Ancient Judaism

LAST UPDATED ON: MARCH 30, 2023 AT 11:33 PM BY REBECCA WALLACE KEENE (HTTPS://WWW.PATHEOS.COM/BLOGS/RECLAIMINGTHETRUTH/AUTHOR/RKEENE/)

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Why the Torah is Not Against Homosexuality

With many states now banning Trans performers, it is important to understand the religious arguments being made. Many Christians have voted for such bans. This is because they believe trans people are telling G-d she made a mistake when they change their gender. Also, they argue the holy text is against transgenders and homosexuality. However, **Rabbi Elliot Kukla reminded us**

(https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/18/opinion/trans-teen-suicide-judaism.html) this week that ancient Judaism recognized six genders. Thus, the holy texts have always supported gender fluidity.

The Genders of Ancient Judaism

Genders Assigned at Birth

There were many genders in ancient Judaism. The Talmud list zachar, nekevah, tumtum, androgynos, aylonit, and saris as genders. As we mentioned in, **The Torah is Not Against Homosexuality (https://www.patheos.com/blogs/reclaimingthetruth/2023/03/the-torah-is-not-against-homosexuality/)**, zachar means male. Nekevah refers to a female. Tumtum refers to someone who is neither fully girl or boy. Androgynos means someone who has characteristics of both the male and the female. These four genders were assigned at birth. Therefore, in ancient Judaism people who fell outside the realms of male and female were not persecuted. Instead, they were assigned a unique gender that allowed them to play a more fluid role in the community.

Genders Chosen Later in Life

There were two other genders which one might obtain later in life. Yes, a change of gender, just like the trans of today, existed in ancient Israel. Aylonit was someone who was labeled as a girl at birth, but as she aged showed male characteristics. Saris refers to someone labeled male at birth who later becomes a eunuch. Thus, in ancient Judaism Trans-genders would have been normal.

The mere existince of these genders in ancient Judaism, proves that the Holy text was never meant to imply that people were only male and female. In fact, two of these terms are for people who change their gender later in life, meaning in ancient Judasm Trans people would have been the norm. It is time we quit using the text to persecute those it was never meant to persecute, and return to the days when we accepted our Trans brothers and sisters as one of us.

The Gender of Adam in Ancient Judaism

Not only is multiple genders not a new idea in Judaism, but indeed, as Rabbi Elliot points out, it may be that the very first human was androgynous. When G-d creates the first human she says she creates them in the image of G-d male and female she creates them. Rabbi Elliot argues that this does not mean G-d created both a male and a female. Rather, the them is one human, Adam, who is both male and feamle. In this interpertation, Adam is androgynous and that would have been the first human gender created.

This leaves no room for doubt. G-d created the androgynous gender. This is the original, the true image of G-d. How then can we persecute these people and not at the same time persecute the very image of G-d? To persecute them for being made in her image is blasephemy of the highest sort.

David and Johnathan

While I was still thinking this interpertation through, I thought about how this may explain why in the text we see what appears to be a very intimate relationship between David and Johnathan, yet both men were still honored and blessed in their community. If one of these men identified as androgynous then the law about a male lying with a male from Leviticus would no longer apply.

David's Gender in ancient Judaism

Surprisingly, there is quite a lot of evidence in the Biblical text to suggest David was androgynous. David loved women, but David also loved Johnathan, saying his love of Johnathan was more than the love of a woman. David was also known for his love of fine clothes and music. He is described as having a ruddy or blushing complexion and beautiful eyes. Yet, David was also a warrior king with at least 8 wives. He also had an affair with Bathsheba. He was a Shepard and a skilled warrior. Thus, David embodied the characteristics of both a male and a female. If David was androgynous then his relationship with Johnathan was a man lying with an androgynous, not a man lying with a man.

Conclusion

This rediscovery of ancient ways should be a call to us to embrace gender fluidity. It should serve as a reminder that Trans people and their accomplishments are a vital part of our community. Adam was the very first human and David was considered Israel's greatest king. It is time for the hate against our Trans brothers and sisters to stop. We must say loudly and clearly: "Our religion and our text does not support this hate." We must vote to give all genders equal rights once again, because this is what the law has always commanded of us.